

# Press Release

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## Prime Minister Juncker proposes that EU becomes a member of the Council of Europe by 2010

Strasbourg, 11.04.2006 – Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly President René van der Linden has warmly welcomed the series of proposals made today by Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker for strengthening the partnership between the two European organisations – including a proposal that the European Union could become a member of the Council of Europe by 2010.

Mr Juncker drew up his report, *Council of Europe-European Union: a sole ambition for the European continent*, in his personal capacity at the request of the Council of Europe's 46 Heads of State and Government. He presented it to the Assembly today, followed by addresses from Romanian Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, representing the Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, and Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, President of the Council of the EU. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso also addressed the Assembly.

Other key recommendations in Mr Juncker's report include:

- EU member states should immediately open the door to EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.
- EU bodies should recognise the Council of Europe as "the Europe-wide reference source for human rights".
- The Commissioner for Human Rights should become an institution to which the EU could refer all human rights problems not covered by its existing machinery.
- The two bodies should establish a joint platform for assessing legal and judicial standards and, when appropriate, adopt each other's standards.
- The EU's Neighbourhood policy should focus on Council of Europe member states and Belarus, with joint programmes planned together.
- Member states should ensure that the Council of Europe, as a major partner of the EU, has the resources it requires.

Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis stressed the importance of the proposal recommending European Union membership in the Council of Europe. "Practically all recommendations by Prime Minister Juncker follow logically from the general principle that the European Union has the obligation to respect human rights and the Council of Europe has the mandate to protect them," he said.

Closing the debate, PACE President René van der Linden said that the Assembly would do "everything in its power" to put Mr Juncker's recommendations into effect, stressing in particular that the Memorandum of Understanding currently being negotiated between the two bodies should take it fully into account. "It is vital that the co-operation between our two organisations becomes systematic," he said.

On Thursday 13 April, the Parliamentary Assembly will debate the future Memorandum of Understanding between the two European organisations, as well as the specific issue of the EU's new Fundamental Rights Agency.

[Link to Prime Minister Juncker's report](#) (PDF)

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 315 members from the national parliaments of the 46 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).